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**SCHOOL BUS SAFETY WEEK KICKS OFF WITH ANNOUNCEMENT OF  
STATEWIDE POSTER WINNERS**

*~ Three students honored for commitment to school bus safety awareness ~*

**TALLAHASSEE** – The Florida Departments of Education, Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, and Transportation today recognized three Florida students for going above and beyond to promote the importance of school bus safety. The students received awards from the Florida Association for Pupil Transportation (FAPT) for taking first place in each of three divisions of a statewide poster contest. The theme for the poster contest, “Be Aware – Know the Danger Zone,” reminds motorists and students to be safe in and around school buses. During the week of Oct. 18-22, the three partnered agencies will encourage districts and communities to conduct motorist awareness activities and recognize dedicated transportation professionals and bus operators who work hard each day to ensure the safe and dependable transportation of students.

“This week serves as an excellent reminder that our school buses are the safest mode of transportation available to our students,” said Education Commissioner Dr. Eric J. Smith. “It also reminds us that no amount of sturdiness can replace a properly educated motorist who understands school bus safety and treats these vehicles with the respect they require as they go about delivering their precious cargo.”

During School Bus Safety Week, the Florida Departments of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) and Transportation (FDOT) urge Floridians to show their support by following all traffic laws and taking extra precautions when school buses are present.

“Drivers assume a great responsibility when getting behind the wheel of a vehicle,” said Director of the Florida Highway Patrol, Colonel John Czernis. “I encourage all licensed drivers and visitors to our state who travel in Florida to log on to [FloridaSchoolBusSafety.gov](http://FloridaSchoolBusSafety.gov) for a refresher on Florida’s laws concerning passing a stopped school bus. The website contains a wealth of information about school bus safety in the Sunshine State.”

“Whether they are on a school bus, getting on or off a bus, walking to school, or riding in our car, we must be ever vigilant for the safety of our children. Especially in areas where we know there are kids and school buses,” said Governor’s Highway Safety Representative Kevin Thibault. “Florida has seen a reduction in overall traffic fatalities for the past four years – a 14 percent reduction in 2009 from 2008 alone. But, there is a long way to go. Even one death is unacceptable.”

The first place winners in each division of Florida’s poster contest will be submitted to the National Association for Pupil Transportation’s (NAPT) competition. NAPT will feature an overall national poster winner during the 2011 National School Bus Safety Week (October 17-21, 2011).

Florida's winners are as follows:

*Division I Winners (Grades K through 2)*

**First Place** – Jennifer Russell, Cypress Creek Elementary, Grade 1 - Volusia County

**Second Place** – Iris Qi, Cypress Creek Elementary, Grade 1 - Volusia County

**Third Place** – Mikaela Guzman, Palm Cove Elementary, Grade 2 - Broward County

*Division II Winners (Grades 3 through 5)*

**First Place** – Mary Silvestro, Hollywood Central Elementary, Grade 5 - Broward County

**Second Place** – Aleena Jackson, Palm Cove Elementary, Grade 5 - Broward County

**Third Place** – Paula Rodriguez, Hollywood Central Elementary, Grade 5 - Broward County

*Division III Winners (Grades 6 through 8)*

**First Place** – German Salazar, Jackson Heights Middle School, Grade 8 - Seminole County

**Second Place** – Madison Slage, Jackson Heights Middle School, Grade 8 - Seminole County

**Third Place** – Jada Brown, Jackson Heights Middle School, Grade 8 - Seminole County

For more information about School Bus Safety, visit [www.floridaschoolbussafety.gov](http://www.floridaschoolbussafety.gov).

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